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UNCLAS E F T O SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 000860

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PLEASE PASS TO S/WCI FOR AMBASSADOR PROSPER, DRL FOR
TAGGART, NEA/ARP

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TAGS: [PHUM YM COUNTER TERRORISM HUMAN RIGHTS](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S 4/10 MEETING WITH AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull

1. (sbu/nf) Summary: In a lengthy 4/10 meeting with Ambassador, a four-person Amnesty International delegation appealed for increased information and access for the families of Yemenis detained at Guantanamo. The far-ranging and amicable discussion included Yemen's progress on the mutually-reinforcing goals of counter-terrorism cooperation and human rights, the detention of Yemenis in country, training of Yemeni law enforcement and security personnel and the imminent trials of a number of suspects in the 2000 terrorist attack on the U.S. Cole. AI's pitch for increased access included complaints that Washington inquiries are not being answered and that human rights groups, pleas for access to Guantanamo have been denied. Ambassador advised delegation to work through and to try to improve the existing channel provided by the International Red Cross for information on detainees. When pressed for a conduit in Washington on this issue, the Ambassador recommended Ambassador Pierre Prosper (S/WCI) as an interlocutor. The delegation was in Sana'a April 10-11 to attend a 2-day conference on "Human Rights for All" organized by AI and a Yemeni human rights organization. All agreed that the discussion was off the record and that any public statement by AI would be provided to the Ambassador for his review prior to its release. End Summary.

FAMILIES OF GUANTANAMO DETAINEES ARE "SUFFERING" FROM LACK OF INFORMATION/CONTACT

2. (sbu/nf) The delegation, led by human rights campaigner Dr. Terry Waite (well-known as a hostage negotiator illegally detained in Lebanon for almost five years), requested the appointment with the Ambassador to discuss the human rights situation in Yemen post-9/11. Other delegation members were Researcher (North America) Rob Freer, Researcher (Middle East) Dr. Lamri Chirouf and AI USA Board of Director Member Farah Brelvi; Pol/Econ Chief was present as notetaker. Dr. Waite opened by stating that the families of the Guantanamo detainees, who are being held without regard for due process, are suffering from a lack of information and that he is also concerned about the damage the situation is causing to the U.S. image as a "defender of freedom and human rights." Freer also complained that it took over a year to get a denial in response to AI's request for access to Guantanamo. When the delegation asked about ROYG visits to Guantanamo, the Ambassador told them that there was one visit for both consular and intelligence purposes.

3. (sbu/nf) The delegation spoke extensively about the families and lawyers they interacted with at the first day of the conference, "Human Rights for All," hosted by AI in cooperation with the Yemeni National Organization for Defense of Human Rights and Freedoms (HOOD). (Note: In addition to lawyers and families of detainees, attendees included human rights activists from the U.S., Canada, Australia and other Gulf States.) In the opening ceremony, Amat al-Alim al-Suswah, Minister of Human Rights, delivered a speech noting September 11's affect on human rights and that that Yemen has been economically and politically harmed by terrorist acts such as the attacks on the USS Cole and the Limburgh, a French oil tanker. (Note: Ambassador's 4/10 meeting with al-Suswah reported septel.) They also noted that over a third of Guantanamo detainees are from Gulf countries and estimated that there are 85 Yemenis being held. Ambassador commented that Yemen's hosting of the event is a positive development given the "allergy in the region to international human rights groups."

4. (sbu/nf) Ambassador broadened the discussion to include the improved human rights situation in Yemen and chastised the international human rights organizations that write reports on Yemen "at a distance," failing to focus on the progress as well as the problems. He suggested an alternate approach that covers the full spectrum of issues and presents a more accurate, balanced picture. Acknowledging significant progress on rights in Yemen over the past ten years, Dr. Chirouf said that he fears that post-9/11 there is a risk that these benefits will "disappear completely." When

Ambassador noted a number of areas of success, i.e., women's freedoms, electoral reforms, more open press, membership in international conventions, and the institutionalization of human rights, Dr. Chirouf admitted that AI's concern is arrests and detentions.

15. (sbu/nf) Even after the Ambassador explained that the Department of Defense is responsible for the process at Guantanamo, the delegation requested that he press Washington for more information for the families. Ambassador strongly encouraged AI and the families to work through and to try and strengthen existing channels of communication established by the International Red Cross (IRC), which has been given access to Guantanamo. Freer noted dissatisfaction because information from IRC is limited by its own policies and by measures to address security concerns that make the system less effective, e.g., requirements that prisoners write letters in English, even though many lack any proficiency in the language. When pushed to provide a name in Washington, the Ambassador suggested AI contact Ambassador Pierre Prosper for information on the process. He also promised to convey the delegation's concerns on behalf of the families back to Washington.

U.S.-YEMEN SECURITY COOPERATION AND PROGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS
- NOT MUTUALLY EXCLUSIVE

16. (sbu/nf) Dr. Waite and Freer commented on U.S.-Yemen security cooperation and the November 2002 drone attack that left five dead. Ambassador emphasized that the U.S. is at war against al-Qaida and explained that the action was taken in full cooperation with the ROYG, against known al-Qaida operatives after previous attempts to apprehend the terrorists left 18 Yemenis dead. Citing the progress on both rights and security, the Ambassador commented that Yemen is an example of how counter-terrorism efforts and human rights can be mutually reinforcing. Dr. Waite countered that Yemen is detaining people and complained that it is doing so under pressure from the U.S. Ambassador pointed out that Yemen has repeatedly privately and publicly stated that it is in its own security and economic interests to fight terror. After extensive discussion, there was an agreement to disagree given the divergent viewpoints on the balance between security cooperation and human rights.

17. (sbu/nf) Dr. Chirouf inquired about press reports that 800 people have been arrested for making anti-American statements at the Grand Mosque in Sana'a during Friday prayers. Ambassador requested that AI tell anyone who asks that this was not done at his direction and that we have not been given any information about the incidents. Brelvi specifically requested that the Ambassador make a statement against the arrests.

U.S. TRAINING OF YEMENI LAW ENFORCEMENT/SECURITY FORCES
ENHANCES HUMAN RIGHTS

18. (sbu/nf) Dr. Chirouf also asked whether the FBI or USG law enforcement has been permitted to interrogate the Yemenis detained by the ROYG. Ambassador made clear that he was not at liberty to discuss details of intelligence cooperation, but elaborated on the U.S. role in providing programs, training and equipment to improve law enforcement capabilities and security information sharing.

19. (sbu/nf) Brelvi produced a letter to the Ambassador concerning the Leahy Law requirement that Post maintain a database on human rights violations committed by local security forces and asked about Post's practices in this regard. (Note: Ambassador did not receive the letter prior to the meeting, but assured the delegation Post will review current practices to ensure full compliance with legal requirements.) Dr. Chirouf expressed particular concern about the Presidential Security Office (PSO), which he claims operates extra-judicially and is responsible for legally-deficient deportations (reported in AI's September 2003 report) and improper detentions and interrogations. Ambassador explained that Post carefully vets candidates for training and U.S.-provided programming. On the issue of deportations, the Ambassador commented that the ROYG had sufficient cause to review the immigration status of students and found that a number were out of status or pursuing a course of Islamic extremism.

HULL